

**REMARKS**

Claims 1, 3, 7, 15-18, 28, and 30-31 are all the claims presently pending in the application. Claims 1, 3, 7, 15, 17, 28, and 30-31 have been amended to more clearly define the invention and claims 2, 4-6, 14, and 29 have been canceled. Claims 1, 15, and 17 are independent.

These amendments are made only to more particularly point out the invention for the Examiner and not for narrowing the scope of the claims or for any reason related to a statutory requirement for patentability.

Applicants also note that, notwithstanding any claim amendments herein or later during prosecution, Applicants' intent is to encompass equivalents of all claim elements.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that claims 5 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. This Amendment cancels claims 2, 4-6, 14 and 29 and incorporates the features of canceled claim 5 into independent claims 1, 15, and 17 to place the application into immediate condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing amendments, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1, 3, 7, 15-18, 28, and 30-31, all the claims presently pending in the Application, are patentably distinct over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

Should the Examiner find the Application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to

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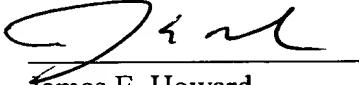
7

discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees or to credit any overpayment in fees to Assignee's Deposit Account No. 50-0510.

Respectfully Submitted,

Date: 1/27/04

  
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